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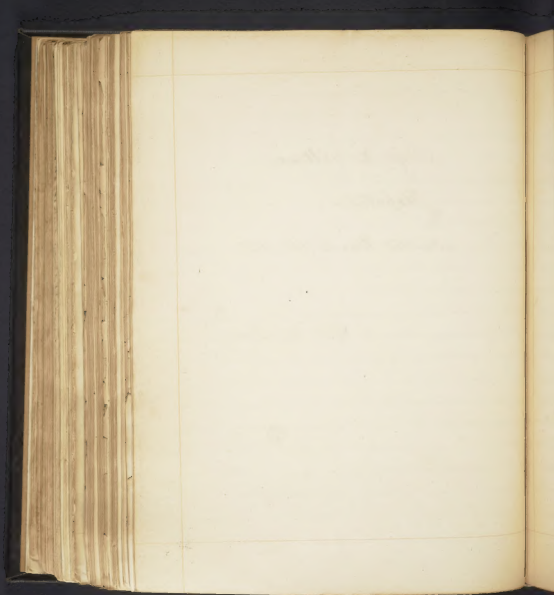
March 9th 1822
Willcox

No
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Major A. Willcox

Hepatitis

admitted March 29th 1822



A Dissertation
on
Hepatitis
by
Major A. Willcox.

No. 70 South 7th Street.

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Hepatitis

This disease is divided by medical writers into two kinds, the acute, and chronic, and usually commences with pyrexia, great pain and tension in the right, hypochondrium. The pulse frequent, strong, hard, and full. The pain extends to the top of the shoulder and clavicle, the respiration is difficult, nausea, uneasiness at stomach sometimes vomiting of bilious matter, great watchfulness and occasionally delirium extreme thirst violent headache, the tongue covered with a white crust, dejection of spirits loss of appetite, great uneasiness, unless when lying on the side affected also attend it. Instances sometimes occur, where the patient cannot lie on either side without considerable distress; pressure on the part with the hand gives much increase of suffering and excites a desire to cough. —

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The intestines are very irregular though oftener constipated the skin and adnata of the eyes are all suffused with bile, as in jaundice. In all inflammations of the liver, the symptoms are more or less severe according to the degree of sensibility. —

The ~~exposures~~ of hepatitis are numerous sudden vicissitudes from heat to cold; excessive fatigue inordinate drinking of ardent spirits; exposure to the heat of summer; external violence, certain passions of the mind, as grief anger; intermittent and remittent fevers, the causes which produce pneumonic inflammation sometimes bring on hepatitis; hence the diseases are occasionally confounded with one another, lastly the acute is very often brought on by the chronic inflammation of that viscus. Doctor Cullen thinks it probable that the acute is always an affection of the outer or external membrane, and the parenchymatic is of the chronic kind. —

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Hepatitis may be confounded with pneumonia or pleuritis, but can be readily distinguished from the former by the extension of the pain to the top of the shoulder, by the yellow colour of the skin, the cough, unaccompanied by expectoration and a less degree of dyspnoea. The heat and pain not being increased upon taking any thing into the stomach, its being able to retain whatever liquors or medicines are taken into it without rejecting them, and the less protrusion will distinguish it from gastritis. Doctor Pemberton says, it is very difficult to mark it from pleuritis, though the difficulty will be removed by observing that a slow inspiration does not produce cough, although it adds to the pain. The pain is increased by gentle pressure under the edge of the ribs, which would not be the case if the inflammation was seated within the chest, and the cough to have succeeded the pain several days and not to have been preceded or equal, as in pleurisy.

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Inflammation of the liver may be distinguished from spasm on the biliary ducts by there being no nausea, by the pain being permanent, by the patient always preferring to keep the body in a straight quiescent posture; whereas the greatest ease, when there is spasm on the gall ducts is obtained by bending the body forward on the knees. Inflammations of the liver, like other inflammatory affections, terminates in resolution, suppuration, gangrene or schirrosus: its termination in gangrene is very rare. Its tendency to suppuration in this country is not so great, as in the warm climates particularly in the east and west indies where it is common. In this country it is rare. Schirrosity may exist without any previous inflammation, as in those who have long been residents in the indies; the schirrosus most generally arises from this cause and the free use of ardent spirits: the disease



is seldom attended with very great or fatal consequences, and is carried off by an hæmorrhage from the nose or hæmorrhoidal vessels; and also by perspiration it has been known to cease on the appearance of erysipelatous inflammation on some external part. —

The most favourable signs in hepatitis are a slow abatement of the febrile symptoms, an alteration in the countenance, strength not much reduced, increase of appetite, and a mitigation of all the above mentioned symptoms. Intensity of pain in the region of the liver; a full and frequent pulse; considerable heat, thirst, dry hot skin, constipation of the bowels, and frequent rigors or chills denote approaching supuration or the formation of matter. After the formation of matter the symptoms of such an event are not very obvious the most prominent of these are a diminution of pain, a sense of pulsation or weight in the right hypochondriac region, especially



When lying on the opposite side; frequent rigors
an accession of fever towards evening with flush-
ings of the face a propensity to vomition
and other hectic symptoms in some cases the
fluctuation of the matter is very evident. —

Dissections show that those who die of hepatitis
have the liver much enlarged and hard to the
touch its colour is very much altered from the
reddish brown to a deep purple; the membranes
are more or less affected, adhesions to the adjacent
parts sometimes happen indurations also take place
Doctor Thomas mentions a case when the organ was
found in putrid state, resembling honeycomb.

Tubercles and cysts are occasionally to be seen in
the liver sinuses contain immense quantities of
matter or pus also found in its substance. —

Treatment.

In commencing the treatment of acute hepatitis
as in all other affections of an inflammatory type.



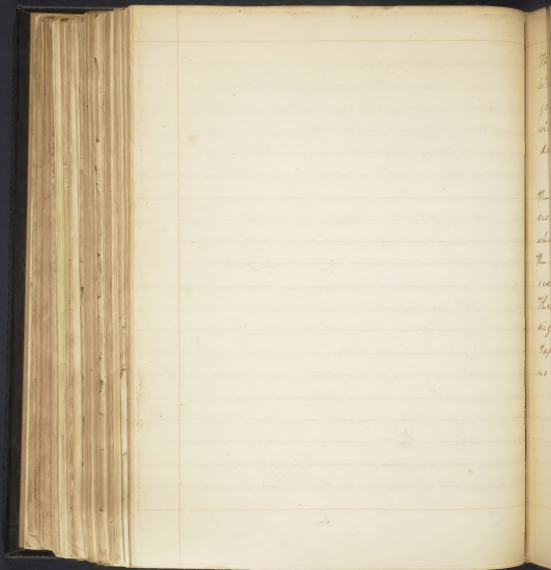
and as the disease is fatal and unusually rapid in its progress towards suppuration, it requires energy of practice. The lancet should succeed the administration of all other remedies, and must be carried to an extent not common and scarcely admissible in other complaints; from a robust and vigorous patient twenty four or thirty ounces of blood, at the first bleeding, will be often profuse. When the pulse remains full and strong the pain on the side violent, phlebotomy is the only remedy the blood should be taken from a large orifice, as physicians have been struck at all times at the utility of drawing blood in this manner in diseases of an inflammatory nature although the same quantity of blood may be taken from a small opening as a large one in the time of its running is so long that the inflammation which is of a local nature demands for its removal, a sudden effect upon the system and is not in the least of extra



By it though the strength of the patient is very much debilitated which in all cases should be avoided as much as possible. It often becomes necessary to retreat the bleeding and this should be done as speedily as convenient without any hesitation. After general bleedings it becomes essential to use local applications such as cups and leeches, they are among the best means of combating acute inflammation of the liver. During the administration of the above mentioned remedies, the exhibition of a very active mercurial cathartic alone or in combination with Jalap, or the mag. apple, is highly beneficial as there appears to be a kind of medical harmony between the colic and the disease, after the operation of the purgative it becomes necessary to keep the bowels in a soluble or laxative condition by gentle aperient medicines and for this purpose nothing is more useful than the saline purgative blended with some of the antimonials.



Among these the tartar emetic answers better than any other as it has the effect of opening the bowels and keeping up a gentle and milde diaphoresis thereby abating the febrile or inflammatory diathesis. After these means have been pursued the application of a large blister on the affected part will prove highly useful: it should be kept on ten, or twelve, hours then should it be inclined to heal up too soon or before the desired effect is produced a fresh one must be applied or the first kept running for some length of time by the same ointment; but a new blister has the preference to any stimulating ointment, but if blistering be resorted to at too early a period, it prevents typical bleedings, and moreover increases the symptoms, intended to be relieved and is productive of great injury: Those remedies connected with a rigid adherence ~~to~~ the antiphlogistic plan, constitute the chief remedies, used in acute hepatitis, should the disease not be removed by these measures and



The inflammation sufficiently reduced the exhibition of mercury in such doses, as to induce a gentle ptyalism continued for several weeks will almost always eradicate the remains of disease. —

To this plan of treatment may be allowed the free use of acidulated drinks, with the admission of cool air, free ventilation. In those cases where great irritability prevails after having employed the remedies for inflammation, the use of some relaxation will be found particularly serviceable. The diet suitable for the patient should be light, digestible, and of the mildest kind, such as, rice water, tapioca, sago, arrow root, and other vegetable articles: no account should animal food be allowed. —

